

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14755

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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF OUTDOOR ART EXHIBIT AFFAIR

REFS: A. MOSCOW 14201 (NOTAL) B. MOSCOW 14691 (NOTAL)

1. NOW THAT THE SECOND ROUND OF THE OUTDOOR UNOFFICIAL ART EXHIBIT AFFAIR HAS ENDED IN A KNOCKDOWN FOR THE ARTISTS, SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE BOUT DESERVE COMMENT. WE HAVE POINTED OUT IN PREVIOUS REPORTING THAT THE DECISION TO BREAK UP THE FIRST ATTEMPT WAS PROBABLY TAKEN AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL, BUT THAT THE MATTER WAS ESCALATED WHEN IT BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL CAUSE CELEBRE. THE SUCCESSFUL STAGING OF THE SECOND EXHIBIT BEARS OUT THIS ANALYSIS AND INDICATES A CAREFUL WEIGHING. PRESUMABLY IN THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE PARTY, OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECISION. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES HOW MUCH SOVIET MOVES TOWARD INTERNATIONAL DETENTE HAVE MADE THEM IMAGE-MINDED

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AND HAVE TO A CERTAIN EXTENT LIMITED THEIR ABILITY TO

ACT INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR OWN DOMESTIC REALM.  
THE SPECTRE OF THOUSANDS OF SOVIET CITIZENS VIEWING  
NON-CONFORMIST PICTURES AND THE CONSEQUENT PERCEIVED  
THREAT TO CONTROL IN THE IDEOLOGICAL AREA, HOWEVER, MUST  
GIVE THE MORE INTERNAL-SECURITY-MINDED LEADERS CAUSE  
FOR CONCERN.

2. THE DANGERS OF SETTING A PRECEDENT IN THIS RESPECT  
MUST HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED, AND WE WOULD SURMISE THAT THE  
REGIME HAS NOT DECIDED TO THROW IN THE TOWEL WHEN IT COMES  
TO CULTURAL CONTROLS. THE EVENT WAS PROBABLY LOOKED ON BY  
THE AUTHORITIES AS A ONE-TIME CONCESSION THEY HAD TO  
MAKE, AND THEY WILL DO WHAT THEY CAN TO STEM FUTURE  
MOVES TOWARD SIMILAR PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF NON-CONFORMIST  
ATTITUDES. THE LESSON OF HAVING TURNED A MINOR  
EVENT WITH AN AUDIENCE OF ABOUT 400 ART ENTHUSIASTS AND  
FOREIGNERS INTO A MASS GATHERING, HOWEVER, CANNOT BE LOST  
ON THEM. WE WOULD GUESS THEY WOULD SEEK GREATER COORDINATION  
AND MORE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF SIMILAR EVENTS IN THE  
FUTURE ALONG WITH STRONGER MOVES TO CUT SUCH INITIATIVES OFF AT  
THE PASS BEFORE THEY GAIN THE POTENTIAL FOR DAMAGE TO THE  
COUNTRY'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. THEY WILL CERTAINLY WANT  
TO AVOID ANOTHER PUBLIC CONFRONTATION. THE AUTHORTIES  
HAVE CONSIDERABLE WEAPONS AT HAND IN THIS RESPECT - SUCH  
AS EXISTING LAWS ON SPECULATION, PARASITISM, AND ILLEGAL  
COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION - TO PRESSURE ARTISTS AND OTHERS  
OF SIMILAR NON-CONFORMIST PERSUASION. IN THE OFFICIAL  
SOVIET VERSION OF THE ARRAIS GIVEN AT A PRESS CONFERENCE  
THE DAY BEFORE THE SECOND EXHIBIT, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE  
CITY SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THERE WERE PROCEDURES WHICH  
COULD BE FLOOWED FOR SUCH SHOWS (HE ALSO CLAIMED THE  
ARTISTS HAD NOT FOLLOWED THEM DURING THE FIRST EVENT), BUT  
ONLY THE AUTHORITIES' FUTURE ACTIONS WILL TELL IF THIS  
INDICATES A MORE ENLIGHTENED APPROACH.

3. AN INTERESTING FEATURE OF THE AFFAIR IS HOW SHREWDLY  
THE ARTIST ORGANIZERS USED THE WESTERN PRESS TO ADVANCE  
THEIR CAUSE. REPORTS AND INFORMATION (SOME OF IT MISLEADING).  
ON THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AUTHORITIES WERE GIVEN TO  
NEWS-HUNGRY JOURNALISTS AND THE PLAYBACK IN THE FOREIGN  
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PRESS AND ON RADIO BROADCASTS MUST HAVE HAD A SIGNIFICANT  
INFLUENCE IN THE FINAL DECISION TO PERMIT THE EXHIBIT.  
THE ADDITION OF ARTISTS TO THE GROUP OF JEWS, GERMANS,  
AND OTHER DISSIDENTS WHO REGULARLY COMMUNICATE WITH  
WESTERN NEWSMEN AND FIND A MEASURE OF PROTECTION IN THE  
PUBLICITY GIVEN THEM MUST BE ANOTHER DISTURBING ASPECT  
OF THE AFFAIR FOR THE REGIME.

4. AS FAR AS THE ARTISTS ARE CONCERNED, IN THE FLUSH OF THE EXHIBIT'S SUCCESS SOME HAVE MENTIONED THAT THEY NOW PLAN TO ATTEMPT TO GAIN PERMISSION TO STAGE ONE-MAN SHOWS OR SMALLER EXHIBITS, PERHAPS IN RENTED HALLS. AT A GET-TOGETHER WITH THE FOREIGN PRESS THE EVENING AFTER THE EXHIBIT, SOME OF THE ORGANIZERS SPOKE OF REPEATING THE EVENT NEXT SPRING AND FALL. INDICATIONS ARE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY PLAN TO BIDE THEIR TIME FOR THE PRESENT, BASK IN THEIR VICTORY, AND PERHAPS AT SOME POINT LATER ON DECIDE HOW THEY CAN COLLECTIVELY OR INDIVIDUALLY MAKE FURTHER MOVES TOWARD RESPECTABILITY. DUBS

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